



NewsBank Hot Topics

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CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

CRIME AND LAW: Boston Marathon Bombings

TOPIC: Two young men set off two bombs in the midst of spectators near the finish line of this year's Boston Marathon, causing 3 deaths and many serious injuries. Who are they, what was their motive and what has happened to them? What process was used to track and identify them? What problems did the media have in covering this story and why? What attack were they planning after Boston? What is being investigated regarding the possible influence of their mother on the motivations for two suspects?

SEARCH TERMS: Boston Marathon AND bomb*

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: A New King in the Netherlands

TOPIC: Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands has abdicated in favor of her son, Willem-Alexander. Their titles are now Princess and King respectively. Willem-Alexander is the first King in the Netherlands for over 100 years. Did he have a coronation? Has he indicated how, if at all, his reign will be different than his mother's? How prevalent is abdication as a means of rule change for this royal family? How different is the role of royalty in the Netherlands than in the United Kingdom? How did the Dutch react to this changeover?

SEARCH TERMS: Princess Beatrix OR King Willem-Alexander

CRIME AND LAW: Bangladesh Building Collapse

TOPIC: The 8 floor building, Rana Plaza in Dacca, in Bangladesh collapsed, killing hundreds of people. Although cracks had been evident the previous day, the owner of the building complex assured people that the building was safe, and the garment factories on the upper stories forced their workers to come to work. The building's owner is currently in custody. Who is the owner and what are his political connections? Was this building built up to code, or were shortcuts taken? Does the desire for inexpensive clothing in the developed world have anything to do with this tragedy? Were people rescued from the ruins?

SEARCH TERMS: Rana Plaza AND collapse OR rescue efforts

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Budget Sequestration

TOPIC: The federal budget sequester refers to a trigger mechanism in the Budget Control Act of 2011 that mandates certain budget cuts and a hard cap on fiscal spending. When did this sequester go into effect and why? What have been the impacts of the spending cuts and what are some impacts that are projected for the future? What parts of the budget negotiations have the strongest disagreement and why?

SEARCH TERMS: sequest* AND budget

HEALTH: Bird Flu

TOPIC: The H7N9 form of bird flu that has been discovered in China infects birds easily and often the infected birds show no symptoms. Several humans who had contracted it have died. Has it been found outside of China? Does it spread easily to humans or among them?

SEARCH TERMS: H7N9 AND bird flu



SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Fall of Baghdad

TOPIC: The 10th anniversary of the fall of Baghdad occurred in April. Though most American troops have left the country, Iraq remains in turmoil, with episodes of political violence happening almost every month. Has life changed for the better since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein? How do Iraqis feel about the war and their lives today?

SEARCH TERMS: Iraq OR Baghdad AND

CRIME AND LAW: Genocide

TOPIC: The genocide trial of Guatemala's former ruler Efraín Ríos Montt has been returned to its original judge, who has ordered the trial to start over from the point of her dismissal. Who else is on trial? What are the charges against him? What was the context for the period in which he ruled?

SEARCH TERMS: Efraín Ríos Montt AND trial

CRIME AND LAW: Ricin Letters

TOPIC: President Obama and Senator Roger Wicker of Mississippi have both received letters filled with a dangerous powder called ricin. Who mailed these letters and why? Why is it so dangerous?

SEARCH TERMS: ricin AND letters

CRIME AND LAW: Gun Law Fails

TOPIC: The U.S. Senate has failed to produce enough votes to pass the Manchin-Toomey Amendment, a law that places the same regulations on gun sales from gun shows and the Internet that currently apply to other gun sales. What are the most compelling arguments for and against this legislation? What has been the reaction to the failure of the bill?

SEARCH TERMS: Manchin-Toomey

ECONOMICS: Bitcoin

TOPIC: Bitcoin is a somewhat controversial form of digital currency that is not currently recognized by any country or bank but is now growing in popularity as an investment. What are the strongest arguments for and against it as an investment? How does it work?

SEARCH TERMS: Bitcoin

ECONOMICS: State Pension Plans

TOPIC: Many states are in trouble finding the money to meet their obligations to their pension plans. What creative ideas are some states or cities trying to help with this problem? What states are in the most trouble and why?

SEARCH TERMS: states AND pension plans

ECONOMICS: Bank of Japan

TOPIC: The Bank of Japan is looking to increase the money supply, hoping that a mild inflation will grow the economy. This is in line with the economic policies of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The country has been in deflation for many years. What are the political risks in this course? How is this different from previous economic policies? Is there any guarantee it will succeed?

SEARCH TERMS: Bank of Japan AND inflation

EDUCATION: Student Demonstrations in Chile

TOPIC: Chilean students have returned school protesting conditions and fees. What are their grievances and what do they want? What is the underlying cause of this situation?

SEARCH TERMS: Chile and student protests

EDUCATION: Armed Security in Schools

TOPIC: The NRA has recommended training teachers and other staff on firearms, and some schools are enhancing their armed security. What have been the patterns in reaction to these ideas from various groups, like teachers, administration, students and parents? What are the advantages and disadvantages of increasing security? What are some other ideas being made?

SEARCH TERMS: schools AND security AND armed

EDUCATION: George W. Bush Presidential Center

TOPIC: The George W. Bush Presidential Center has opened with Presidents Obama, Clinton, Carter and George Bush Sr. attending the ceremony. Where is the library located and why was it selected? What presidential papers will be there and what will be exhibited in the various rooms?

SEARCH TERMS: George W. Bush Presidential Center

HISTORY: National Parks

TOPIC: National Park Week is celebrated to commemorate the history of our national parks. Who was the first U.S. president to set aside public lands around Hot Springs, Arkansas to protect it and why? What role did Teddy Roosevelt play in the creation of Yellowstone National Park and what is the historic significance of this park? What other national parks interest you, and why?

SEARCH TERMS: National Parks

HISTORY: Battle of Chancellorsville

TOPIC: It has been 150 years since the Battle of Chancellorsville, VA took place during the U.S. Civil War. What was the significance of this battle to the status of the Confederate States of America? What famous general was killed in this battle, what were the circumstances of his death and what was his significance to the war?

SEARCH TERMS: Chancellorsville AND Civil War

HISTORY: Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

TOPIC: April marked the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, during which poorly armed Jews battled their Nazi captors. It ended with the defeat of the Jewish fighters and the razing of the ghetto. Why is this doomed uprising celebrated today? What were the ceremonies held in commemoration and who attended?

SEARCH TERMS: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

SOCIAL ISSUES: Sale of Sacred Items

TOPIC: A French court allowed the sale of 70 Hopi masks, even as it acknowledged their sacred value. Hopis and others were dismayed by this ruling and subsequent sale. Who are the Hopi and where is their tribe located? What role do masks play in their religion? What was the reasoning of the judge in this case?

SEARCH TERMS: Hopis AND masks AND Paris

SOCIAL ISSUES: Immigration Reform

TOPIC: Congress is debating how to reform our current immigration policies. What are some of the specifics being debated and what is the reasoning behind each side? What are some of the problems we are currently having today, and what aspects of reform are getting broad agreement?

SEARCH TERMS: immigration AND reform



SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT: Earth Day

TOPIC: The first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970. What does this day represent and what are some changes adopted because of it? In what countries is it celebrated, and how do these countries differ in policy?

SEARCH TERMS: Earth Day

ENVIRONMENT: Earthquake in China

TOPIC: An earthquake in China killed 188 people, injured another 11,000 and left thousands more homeless. It is on the same fault line that in 2008 produced an earthquake that killed 90,000. Why are the death tolls so disparate? What emergency relief are the authorities providing?

SEARCH TERMS: China AND earthquakes AND disaster relief

HEALTH: Health Exchange

TOPIC: State lawmakers in Washington have found a way to push part time public workers out of their state health plan and into a federal health care exchange plan that is part of the Affordable Care Act. What impact will this have in federal and state costs? What are the benefits and liabilities of a health exchange system?

SEARCH TERMS: exchange AND Washington AND state AND health plan

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Earth like Planets

TOPIC: The Kepler team of scientists at the Ames Research Center at NASA has discovered two planets about 1200 light years away that could possibly support life. What kind of system are the planets in and what evidence suggests that they could support life? What other discoveries have been made from information taken from the Kepler spacecraft?

SEARCH TERMS: Kepler AND planets AND life

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: British Library and World Wide Web

TOPIC: The British Library is attempting to archive the British portion of the World Wide Web and to make it available to the public. Some sites will be archived annually, while others will be captured daily. It has posted a list of 100 sites that shows the diversity of what they are attempting. What are the technological challenges involved in this effort? How does the size of the contents of the web compare to that of their other collections?

SEARCH TERMS: British Library AND World Wide Web

SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS: Sports Security

TOPIC: The terrorist attack at the Boston Marathon has spurred concern about the safety and security at large sports events. What kind of security do most marathons have? What is being discussed to enhance it? What kind of security is there at large stadium events and is it enough?

SEARCH TERMS: (sports OR marathons OR stadium) AND (security OR terrorism)

SPORTS: Masters Tournament

TOPIC: The Masters Tournament at Augusta National Golf Course was won by Australian Adam Scott. What are other high points in his golf career? What were some of the most impressive shots played in the Tournament?

SEARCH TERMS: Masters Tournament AND Adam Scott

SPORTS: Premier League Champs

TOPIC: Manchester United have won the Premier League title for the 20th time, with 13 of those games under manager Sir Alex Ferguson. Robin Van Persie scored a hat trick in the first half against Aston Villa to sew up the title. Who are some of the great players who have played for Man U and Ferguson? What honors has Ferguson received?

SEARCH TERMS: Manchester United AND Sir Alex Ferguson

SPORTS: Champions League Teams

TOPIC: It is incredibly likely that two German teams will face off in the Champions League final after they each defeated their Spanish opponents by 4 goals in the semi-finals. Who were their opponents and who did the scoring for Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich respectively? How did the Bundesliga improve itself since 2002? Does these teams' success mean it is the strongest league in Germany?

SEARCH TERMS: Champions League AND semifinals

SPORTS: Doping Scandal

TOPIC: The lead trainer at the Goldolphin Stable in Newmarket, UK, has been suspended after it was determined that steroids were administered to a horse under his supervision contrary to British racing rules. The stables owner, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum has been a leading proponent of keeping British racing clean. How did he respond to this? How did British racing deal with the trainer? What is somewhat different about approaches to steroids between Britain and other nations with big racing industries?

SEARCH TERMS: Goldolphin Stable AND steroids OR Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum

SPORTS: Louisville Beats Michigan in NCAA Championship

TOPIC: The University of Louisville Cardinals have beaten the University of Michigan Wolverines in the NCAA basketball championship. Who were the key players and what were the best plays? What are the coaching strengths of Rick Pitino and what are some key achievements of his?

SEARCH TERMS: Louisville AND Michigan AND championship

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS**FILM AND TELEVISION: Oblivion**

TOPIC: A new science fiction film co-written, directed and produced by Joseph Kosinski called Oblivion draws inspiration from the science fiction films of the 1970s. What are some films that are paid homage by Oblivion? What is the plot? What film series is Joseph Kosinski most known for?

SEARCH TERMS: Oblivion

FILM AND TELEVISION: Berlin Film Festival Winner

TOPIC: Nazif Mujic, a Bosnian gypsy who was basically playing himself, won best actor at the Berlin Film Festival. What was the plot of the movie, An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker, in which he appeared and how does it relate to his own life? How did his neighbors react to his win? Who were some of the other nominees and award winners in Berlin?

SEARCH TERMS: Nazif Mujic AND Berlin Film Festival

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Reopening of the Rijksmuseum

TOPIC: The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has completed its renovation and returned its art. This project has taken ten years. Who are some of the artists in its collection and what are some of the masterpieces it holds? What did the renovation change about the museum?

SEARCH TERMS: Rijksmuseum AND collection OR renovation

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: The Louvre

TOPIC: The Louvre has allowed Italian conceptual artist Michelangelo Pistoletto to decorate its iconic pyramid. He has placed a triple looped infinity symbol made of mirrors on it, facing the financial district of the city. Has this artwork any intrinsic meaning? Has the Louvre allowed its pyramid to be incorporated into any other artwork? Who created the pyramid and what was the initial response to it?

SEARCH TERMS: Louvre AND Michelangelo Pistoletto

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Cubist Collection

TOPIC: Art collector Leonard Lauder has donated his collection of Cubist art to the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). How does his collection complement the existing collection? What is Cubism and why was it an important movement in modern art?

SEARCH TERMS: Leonard Lauder AND (Museum of Modern Art OR MOMA) AND cubism

LITERATURE: The Orphan Master's Son

TOPIC: The Orphan Master's Son, a novel by Adam Johnson, has won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. What is the book about and what are the qualities that have impressed the critics? What kind of fiction that Adam Johnson write and what other authors has he been compared to?

SEARCH TERMS: The Orphan Master's Son AND Adam Johnson

LITERATURE: Pablo Neruda

TOPIC: Chile has exhumed the body of Communist poet Pablo Neruda, who died during the Pinochet era. They are going to do an autopsy to see if he was killed by the state. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. What type of poetry did he write? Why was he exiled from Chile? Who made him ambassador to France and when did he serve in this post? What is hoped to be learned by the autopsy?

SEARCH TERMS: Pablo Neruda

PERFORMING ARTS: Olivier Awards

TOPIC: The British theater's Olivier Awards occurred recently and Helen Mirren won one for portraying Queen Elizabeth II. This joins the Oscar she won for playing the same part some years previously. Who are the Olivier awards named for? What was another major point of similarity between Mirren's stage and screen roles? Who were some of the other winners of this award?

SEARCH TERMS: Olivier Awards AND Helen Mirren

PERFORMING ARTS: Disgraced

TOPIC: The Pulitzer Prize for drama has gone to actor and writer Ayad Akhtar's play Disgraced. What is this play about and how does he approach the issues? What are the qualities of his writing that impress the critics?

SEARCH TERMS: Disgraced AND Ayad Akhtar

PERFORMING ARTS: Country Music Awards

TOPIC: Country musician Luke Bryan has won entertainer of the year at the Country Music Awards. What work was the award for and what were the qualities the critics found most impressive about it? What are some other strong points in his career as a musician?

SEARCH TERMS: Luke Bryan

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS**PEOPLE: Roger Ebert**

TOPIC: Roger Ebert was an esteemed and popular film critic. What was his style of film criticism and why was it effective? What were his most and least favorite films and why?

SEARCH TERMS: Roger Ebert

PEOPLE: Richie Havens

TOPIC: Singer and songwriter Richie Havens, who composed and played an interesting mix of folk, soul and rhythm and blues is often remembered for his performance of the song Freedom at the Woodstock concert in 1969. What were the circumstances under which the song Freedom was played at Woodstock? What are some of his most famous songs and most critically esteemed albums and why? What was his unique style of guitar playing? What are some of his most popular cover version of other people's songs?

SEARCH TERMS: Richie Havens

PEOPLE: George Jones

TOPIC: Country singer George Jones had dozens of hits on the country charts across five decades and was a strong influence on country music and on many singers outside of the country music genre. What were some of his major hits? What musicians claim him as an influence?

SEARCH TERMS: George Jones

PEOPLE: Margaret Thatcher

TOPIC: Margaret Thatcher was the former British Prime Minister. She was a divisive individual in office. Which of her policies did some people complain about? What were her triumphs in office?

SEARCH TERMS: Margaret Thatcher

PEOPLE: Horacio Cartes

TOPIC: Horacio Cartes has been elected president of Paraguay in his first run for office of any kind. He is a member of the elite families that dominate Paraguay's economy. His election returns the Colorado Party to power. Who was his opponent in the race? What issues did he campaign on? What happened to the last elected president of the country?

SEARCH TERMS: Paraguay AND Horacio Cartes

PEOPLE: Al Neuharth

TOPIC: Al Neuharth has left a legacy in journalism, in large part by founding USA Today, The Freedom Forum and The Newseum. What other newspapers did he work at and what did he do there? What was his column called and what was its viewpoint? What does the Freedom Forum do and how was it created?

SEARCH TERMS: Al Neuharth

PEOPLE: Pat Summerall

TOPIC: Pat Summerall was a distinguished U.S. sportscaster. What sports did he cover and for what networks? What are some of the skills required and the key information that a good sportscaster has to provide? What were some of the skills that distinguished him?

SEARCH TERMS: Pat Summerall

PEOPLE: Annette Funicello

TOPIC: Annette Funicello was a very popular singer and actress, best known for her role as a child in the Mickey Mouse Club television show and later for her beach party films with fellow actor and singer Frankie Avalon. What were some of the more popular songs she sang and what songwriters wrote for her? What were some of her most popular films?

SEARCH TERMS: Annette Funicello

PEOPLE: Superman's 75th

TOPIC: It's been 75 years since writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster created the comic book superhero Superman. What city did these men come from and how did they meet and create this iconic character? What does the character of Superman mean to American culture and how has he changed over the years? How have the copyright to Superman changed hands over the years, what problems have there been and how have they been resolved?

SEARCH TERMS: Superman